

August 3, 2007

Protect the Public Health from Tainted Imports

Enhance FDA's Ability to Protect America's Food and Drug Supply

Dear Colleague:

Over the last several months, we have witnessed the ever increasing danger of tainted imports, particularly food imports, coming to our shores. Recent reports of melamine tainted pet food, diethylene glycol tainted cough syrup, and antibiotic tainted seafood, predominantly from China, led many to rightly question the strength of our food and drug import safety system.

Twice the amount of food is imported into our country as compared to ten years ago. Yet, the Food and Drug Administration examines less than one percent of these imports. Given the urgency of this pressing concern, we now have the responsibility to create responsible, risk based legislation that will protect the American public from tainted imports.

Today, I am releasing a discussion draft that will begin the necessary work to correct this growing problem. The draft provides a user fee on food and drug import shipments. The fee would be directed for personnel at both the border and at FDA laboratories to expedite processing and fortifying our food and drug safety system.

In addition to the user fee, the discussion draft would grant new authorities to FDA to give it the flexibility it needs to clamp down on bad actors attempting to contaminate our nation's food supply. Furthermore, the draft includes a voluntary system for companies to receive expedited movement of food and ingredients through the inspection process in return for ensuring that their food supply chain is safe and secure.

Attached is the discussion draft and summary. I look forward to working with all of you as we craft solid legislation to protect the American public from adulterated imports. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Jack Maniko of my staff at 6-2424 or jack.maniko@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

JOHN D. DINGELL
CHAIRMAN